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*** *Press Release* ***

In Wake of Pandemic, Jersey City Set to Launch 1st in the Nation Comprehensive Inner City Vertical Farming Program

Initiative to Focus on Food Deserts, Inequity with Food Access, and Education on Healthy Eating; Program is a Partnership with AeroFarms & World Economic Forum

Jersey City – **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** announced this week that the City of Jersey City will be moving forward with the *1st in the nation municipal vertical farming program*. The program will be in conjunction with **AeroFarms**, the world leader in vertical farming, and the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** who recently *selected Jersey City as their first partner in the Healthy Cities and Communities 2030 Initiatives*.

“As we work through our municipal budget that has been decimated due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are making choices on what programs to keep.” said **Mayor Fulop**. “It is clear that the virus has had a disproportionate impact on people with pre-existing heart conditions, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes which is directly linked to a person’s diet, and as a result we feel it is more important than ever to focus on food access and education.”

The Vertical Farming Program is moving forward as the city rebounds from the impact of COVID-19. The virus has impacted Jersey City at a scale larger than many states across the country as the city has experienced to date more than 6,000 COVID-19 cases and more than 400 COVID-19 fatalities, with a disproportionate amount impacting more economically challenged areas of the city.

“We know diet is a key predictor of life expectancy and the Coronavirus has made clear the huge inequities on food access and food education that exists in different communities” said **Stacey Flanagan the Director of Health and Human Service for Jersey City**.

The Vertical Farming Program will consist of 10 vertical farms throughout Jersey City located in senior centers, schools, public housing complexes, and municipal buildings. The 10 sites will grow 19,000 pounds of vegetables annually using water mist and minimal electricity. The food will be free to the public, the only requirement being that residents participate in healthy eating workshops and agree to quarterly health screenings.

The city’s Health and Human Service Department will run the program with a health-monitoring component to track participants’ progress under a greener diet in the areas of blood pressure, cholesterol,

diabetes and obesity. Crops will be integrated with other Healthy Food Access initiatives including senior meal programs.

The program is part of the broader initiative from the World Economic Forum towards partnerships with cities. Earlier this year the World Economic Forum selected 4 cities (Moscow, Mumbai, Austin, Jersey City) to launch the Healthy City 2030 initiative, which will target measurable changes to the health of each community.

“The Healthy Cities and Communities initiative is a flagship effort of the World Economic Forum. In collaboration with both private-public sector stakeholders, the initiative aims to catalyze new ecosystems that will enable socially vibrant and health and well-being centric cities and communities,” said **Mayuri Ghosh, Head of the Healthy Cities and Communities initiative at the World Economic Forum**. “Establishing a secure supply of nutritious food via locally sourced vertically farmed greens in collaboration with AeroFarms has been a key accomplishment of the Forum’s partnership with Jersey City. The shared insights will be incorporated into efforts underway in other global cities.”

The vertical farming program with AeroFarms and the World Economic Forum is the latest and broadest initiative Jersey City has launched around food access including more than 5,000 food market tours for seniors to educate on healthy eating, and the grant program on the “Healthy Corner Store” initiative.

“The Mayor and I were both selected as Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum and while we have known each other for years I’m excited to work with Jersey City in this formal capacity,” said **David Rosenberg CEO of AeroFarms**. “Societies’ structural food problems have become more clear with COVID-19. The world needs more distributed, localized food production systems. We also need new ways to get healthy food to our most disadvantaged members of society. I am honored to work to work with Mayor Fulop and the people of Jersey City to find better solutions.”

“This partnership will allow us to provide thousands of pounds of locally-grown, nutritious foods that will help close the hunger gap and have an immeasurable impact on the overall health of our community,” Mayor Fulop said.

About the World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It is independent, impartial and not tied to any special interests.

About AeroFarms

AeroFarms is widely considered the world leader in Vertical Farming. Headquartered in New Jersey, the company's mission is to "grow plants for the betterment of humanity". AeroFarms enables local food production and therefore makes it possible for people to enjoy freshly harvested food. AeroFarms grows without pesticides, not organic pesticides, but zero pesticides so food is healthier to eat.

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